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Letting Go of Past Shame and Guilt

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ALLYSON VOERG

Letting Go of Past Shame and Guilt

I wove words into his hair
that I could not say aloud.
To speak them into existence
would be to awaken a shame
so deep inside me.
To see them hang low in the air,
would be to bow my own head
down with guilt, as I do every time
the memory hits the back of my
throat, where *his* tongue tried to reach
every time.

He would hold my head down,
a wide hand at my nape,
a slab of concrete that stole
my voice so I could not speak.
Now I hold my own head down,
chin inching towards the stones
sinking deep into my stomach.
Each time I recall that memory
is another pin tacked to
the board of my skin,
each time I dare to imagine
what he will think of me,

what he will see in the story:
that I am weak; I am guilty.

The words come slow, grating my
throat, each one becoming a
methodical blow to my self-esteem.
I begin to cinch myself closed,
but somehow he does not flinch.
He moves only with his words,
which serve to remind me that
my image in his eyes is
unwavering. His love is a
gravity that tethers me to safety
in a swirling storm of uncertainty.

My shaking fingers find
his smooth gold curls, and
I curl and re-curl and recall
all of my past mistakes.
So I may braid them in
to his long hair, hidden within
his acceptance of me.
So I may forget, for even a second,
all that has been done to me.
So I can begin to pry up the
pins and stretch out my neck,
wringing my spine dry of
my shame and guilt,
and stand straight within
my self-sovereignty.